THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • WEDNESDAY • JUNE 24, 2020 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

• CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • [illegible] • KOCHI • [illegible] • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • [illegible] • HUBBALLI • [illegible] • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • [illegible]

A file picture of Indian High Commission officials Dwimu Brahma (R) and Selvadhas Paul who returned home from Pakistan | AFP

CUT MISSION STRENGTH BY 50%, INDIA TELLS PAK AMID DIPLOMATIC ROW

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi

BILATERAL relations with Pakistan dipped sharply on Tuesday with India directing it to reduce the strength of its High Commission in New Delhi by half, holding it responsible for cross-border violence and terrorism.

According to a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs, Pakistan's charge d'affaires Syed Haider Shah was summoned to the ministry and informed about the decision. "Shah was told India will reciprocally reduce its diplomatic presence in Islamabad by the same proportion within a week," the ministry said.

More often than not, the treatment of diplomats in the Capital is a mirror image of the bilateral relationship.

"They have been engaged in acts of espionage and maintained dealings with terrorist organisations. The activities of the two officials caught red-handed and expelled on May 31 was one example in that regard," the statement said.

The decision to reduce the strength of the Pakistan High Commission by half comes a week after two Pakistan High Commission officials were arrested on charges of espionage and sent back. In what was seen as a tit-for-tat, Pakistani authorities arrested two Indian High Commission staffers for their alleged involvement in a hit-and-run case. They were later released and are back in India.

According to sources, the current strength of the Pakistan high commission is 110. However, both missions are not functioning at full strength after Islamabad drastically downgraded ties in August last year following the Centre's decision to scrap Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

They even refused to send a high commissioner. Both missions are headed by deputy high commissioners.

This is, however, not the first time that Pakistan has been asked to reduce its strength in the High Commission. A similar decision was taken following the December 13, 2001 attack on Parliament. New Delhi has blamed Pakistan-based terror organisations for carrying out the attack.

TRUMP GAMBIT

US suspends H-1B visas, cites job losses

PUSHKAR BANAKAR AND BISMAH MALIK @New Delhi

US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order enabling the suspension of green cards and non-immigrant work visas such as the H-1B till December, a move that is likely to affect thousands of Indians.

However, the order said existing H-1B visa holders will not be impacted. The White House said the visa system will undergo a permanent overhaul in future making it merit based as opposed to the current lottery system.

The categories that have been suspended include H-4 (spouse of H-1B workers), H-2B (low-skilled workers), J (cultural and education workers) and L-1 (intra-company transfer).

The Trump administration claims that the freezing of visas was done due to the economic impact of the coronavirus lockdowns and to give priority to Americans in the wake of record unemployment levels. The move is expected to free up over five lakh jobs in the US market, officials say.

Indians are the largest beneficiaries of the H-1B visa, accounting for around three-fourths of the total 85,000 visas issued annually. Around four lakh Indians are in the US on the H-1B visa.

The biggest impact will be felt by IT bigwigs such as TCS, Cognizant, Tech Mahindra, Larsen and Toubro and Infosys. The companies saw a decline in H-1B visas by over 60% from 18,320 in 2015 to 6,885 in 2020. The H-1B denial rate has gone up to about 32%. P9

FIGURE IT OUT

1.86 lakh

registrations for the H-1B visa from India were received by the US for the fiscal year 2021, as of April 1 this year

67.7%

The figure amounts to 67.7% of the total 2.75 lakh applications received by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services

65K

is the annual cap for H-1B visas, with an extra 20,000 for those with advanced degrees from a US institution

Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today. Disappointed by today's proclamation - we'll continue to stand with immigrants and work to expand opportunity for all.

Sundar Pichai, Alphabet CEO

Disengage decision biggest takeaway

Will take a long time before both sides actually pull back from all friction points; Army Chief visits Leh

MAYANK SINGH & PUSHKAR BANAKAR
@New Delhi

INDIA and China decided to disengage from their stand-off positions in Eastern Ladakh during the marathon Corps Commander-level talks on Monday, but it will take a long time before forces actually move back on the ground. "Modalities for disengagement from all friction areas were discussed and will be taken forward by both sides," a highly placed source confirmed.

The decision was taken at the second meeting of Corps Commanders in Moldo on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which was held in a 'cordial, positive and constructive atmosphere'. But their first meeting on June 6 had similar sounding protocols, yet there was a bloody face-off at Galwan Valley on June 15, where 20 Indian jawans died in action. So, the Indian side is understandably wary.

The Indian delegation at Monday's talks was led by 14 Corps Commander Lt Gen Harinder Singh while the Chinese was headed by the Commander of the Tibet Military District Maj Gen Liu Lin.

"We must wait till the retreat of the Chinese soldiers actually begins on the ground," a source said. India has clearly reiterated its position that status quo ante must be restored in the areas of stand-off.

A senior officer aware of the situation said the entire process will take time as what was clinched was a broad agreement. "There will now be meetings between Division Commanders of both sides to work out the specifics." Sector Commanders will then get involved to firm up the nuts and bolts of the actual pullback. The retreat of soldiers will be in phases, the officer added.

At the diplomatic level, India took a veiled dig at China with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar saying the world's leading voices should act in an exemplary manner by respecting international law and recognising the interests of partners.

At the military level, Army Chief General M M Naravane visited Ladakh's capital Leh to take stock of the situation.

Sinologist B R Deepak described the decision to disengage as a expression of intent. "It's not clear as yet, I think it is a statement of intent the way they made it on June 6 followed by a series of meetings at both military and diplomatic levels," said Deepak, who heads the Centre for Chinese and South Asian Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. P9

Jaishankar raps China

"Recognising the legitimate interests of partners, supporting multilateralism and promoting common good are the only way of building a durable world order," Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said without naming China, while speaking at the RIC meet | P9

Anti-dumping duty on Chinese steel

New Delhi: The Department of Revenue has imposed anti-dumping duty on flat rolled zinc/aluminium coated steel originating or exported from China, Korea and Vietnam for five years. The notification said after complaints of many steelmakers, including Jindal Steels, the Directorate-General of Trade Remedies came to the conclusion that steel produced from these countries is exported to India below their normal subjected value, thus amount to dumping. The decision came after countrywide protest to ban products from China. Parallelly, the Centre tweaked rules to make it mandatory for all foreign firms registering fresh products for sale in India to mention the country of origin in the Government e-Marketplace. It will be mandatory for existing products too.

IAS OFFICER NAMED IN IMA SCAM COMMITS SUICIDE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @BENGALURU

SENIOR IAS officer B M Vijayashankar, an accused in the multi-crore I Monetary Advisory scam, allegedly ended his life by hanging at his residence in Tilak Nagar police limits here on Tuesday evening. While the exact cause is being investigated, it is strongly suspected that the officer took his own life as he was depressed after his name surfaced in the scam and he was also arrested in the case.

Police said his family members reported to the police about the incident around 8 pm. "As Vijayashankar did not open his room door, his family members broke it open and found him hanging from the ceiling fan. Though they brought him down, he was dead by that time, after which they alerted us," an official said.

The police said that no suicide note was found and forensic experts were pressed into service. P5

Full lockdown? Maybe. Maybe not, say mantris

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

IT isn't just the common citizens who are confused whether the Karnataka Government will implement another complete lockdown owing to the rising number of Covid-19 cases. Ministers themselves are not on the same page regarding the issue. A day after Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa asked officials to implement lockdown measures more stringently in clusters and hotspots, Karnataka was abuzz with murmurs that another complete lockdown is coming.

Adding to the worries, Health Minister B Sriramulu on Tuesday said there could be a lockdown if the number of cases keep rising. "Four wards in Bengaluru have already been sealed for 14 days. If the situation continues, we are thinking of implementing a complete lockdown in the entire Bengaluru city," he said while addressing the press.

However, he added that any such decision will come only after meeting with the Chief Minister, the Covid-19 task force, experts and other officials.

But his cabinet colleague and Revenue Minister R Ashoka struck a differing note when he said any decision to implement a lockdown will have to come from the Union Government after thorough monitoring of the situation. "The Union Government is monitoring the situation closely and any decision will come from there. We will take decisions based on experts' reports and it won't be a knee-jerk reaction. We can't impose a lockdown today and then lift it in some time. We won't reduce ourselves to a laughing stock", he said.

He added that the State Government had, only on Monday, decided to seal off adjoining roads in localities that report Covid-19 cases instead only the adjoining houses as was being done earlier. P3

NO TALKS AT DEF MINISTER LEVEL, CHINA TOLD

MAYANK SINGH @New Delhi

IN a clear snub to Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe, New Delhi on Tuesday rubbished any possibility of his holding talks with his visiting Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh in Moscow. Both are expected to attend the World War II Victory Day Parade in Russia on Wednesday.

Shortly after Chinese government mouthpiece *Global Times* did kite-flying on bilateral talks, Defence Ministry spokesperson A Bharat Bhushan Babu denied it.

"Chinese State Councilor and Defence Minister Wei Fenghe is expected to attend Russia's Victory Day parade in Moscow on Wednesday, and since Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is also attending the event, the two will very likely meet in Moscow over border tensions between the two countries," wrote *Global Times*.

Rajnath Singh started his three-day visit to Russia on Monday.

Global Times quoted an expert to say if the meeting happens, it would contribute to easing the tense situation along the border in Ladakh.

K'TAKA COVID BATTLE

322 Test positive on Tuesday

9,721 Positive cases so far

6,004 Total recoveries

150 Total deaths

Govt caps Covid treatment cost, private hospitals sore

IFFATH FATHIMA AND RANJANI MADHAVAN @Bengaluru

THOSE infected with the novel coronavirus and looking to get treated at a private hospital will have to shell out Rs 1.50 lakh for 15 days in a general ward. The cost goes up to Rs 1.80 lakh in a high-dependency unit (HDU), Rs 2.25 lakh for an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Rs 3.75 lakh for an ICU with ventilator. However, the actual number of days a Covid-19 patient is admitted can be longer or shorter, depending on whether they are asymptomatic or symptomatic.

On Tuesday, the Karnataka Government capped prices of treatment cost at private hospitals based on two categories — those referred by public health authorities and the other who approach private hospitals directly.

The package rates for Covid-19 patients referred by public health authorities, that is those covered under the Ayushman Bharat-Arogya Karnataka scheme, will be as Rs 5,200 per day for general ward, Rs 7,000 for HDU, Rs 8,500 for isolation ICU without ventilator and Rs 10,000 for isolation ICU with ventilator. The package ceiling rates at private hospitals for those who pay by cash will be Rs 10,000 per day for general ward, Rs 12,000 for HDU, Rs 15,000 for isolation ICU without ventilator and Rs 25,000 for isolation ICU with ventilator. These rates will not be applicable to patients subscribing to insurance packages. P4

Don't get clean bowled by a fraudulent or an unauthorised transaction in your bank account

Notify the bank immediately

Umesh Yadav
Indian Cricketer and RBI Employee

- The longer you take to notify the bank, the higher will be the risk of loss
- If the fraudulent transaction is due to your negligence, you will bear the loss till you report to the bank
- When you notify the bank of a fraudulent transaction, ask for an acknowledgment. The bank should resolve your complaint within 90 days from the date of its receipt
- Always keep your bank's contact details handy to report fraudulent transactions

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